

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7621
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 1652

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, EC
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ADMIRAL POVEDA ON NARCOTICS EFFORT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FALCO AND ARELLANO CALLED ON ADMIRAL POVEDA MARCH 15 AND PRESENTED FORCEFUL SUMMARY OF USG CONCERNS OVER NARCOTICS PROBLEM AND OUR PERCEPTION OF THE TRAFFICKING CHAIN. ADMIRAL POVEDA RESPONDED THAT THERE HAD BEEN IMPROVEMENT OVER PAST FEW YEARS, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT AND HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM WAS NEEDED. HE PROMISED TO SEEK EARLY CABINET APPROVAL OF A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC STEPS INTENDED TO REDUCE CORRUPTION AND IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN CONTROLLING TRAFFICKING. END SUMMARY.

2. SENIOR ADVISOR MATHEA FALCO AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY RICHARD ARELLANO, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE CORR, AND POL OFFICER COTTER, SPENT ONE HOUR ON THE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 15 WITH SUPREME COUNCIL PRESIDENT, VICE ADMIRAL ALFREDO POVEDA. MEETING WITH POVEDA WAS ARRANGED AT LAST MINUTE AFTER DURAN BECAME ILL DURING CABINET MEETING THAT SAME MORNING. NEITHER MINGOV JARRIN NOR SUBSECRETARY MANRIQUE WAS PRESENT.

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3. FALCO PRESENTED USG POINT OF VIEW, EMPHASIZING THE INTEREST PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE HAVE IN THE EFFORT TO COMBAT NARCOTICS ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING. SHE NOTED THE DANGER TO GOVERNMENTS FROM THE CORRUPTIVE EFFORT OF TRAFFICKING. SHE ALSO NOTED THE INTEREST OF CONGRESS IN THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM, AND THE FACT THAT SHE WOULD BE APPEARING FOR THREE DAYS OF HEARING BEFORE CONGRESS

NEXT WEEK WHEN THE SUBJECT OF ECUADOR WOULD SURELY ARISE.

4. FALCO UNDERLINED THE EXCELLENT STATE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THE INTEREST OF BOTH SECRETARY VANCE AND THE PRESIDENT IN HER VISIT TO ECUADOR. SHE ADDED THAT THE INCREASING REPUTATION, NOTED EVER MORE FREQUENTLY IN CONGRESS AND THE MEDIA, OF ECUADOR AS A COUNTRY WITH A MAJOR ROLE IN TRAFFICKING, COULD PRESENT A THREAT TO THOSE RELATIONS. SHE NOTED OUR PARTICULAR CONCERN THAT KNOWN TRAFFICKERS APPEAR TO OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY IN ECUADOR AND THAT THE WIDELY SHARED PERCEPTION IS ONE OF LACK OF STRONG ACTION BY THE GOE TO DIMINISH THIS LARGE-SCALE TRAFFIC. WITH RESPECT TO THE EFFECT OF THIS PERCEPTION ON CONGRESS AND POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES FOR ECUADOR STEMMING FROM THIS, FALCO NOTED THAT CONGRESS HAS AUTHORITY TO DISAPPROVE THE CHAPARRAL/VULCAN SALE, SHOULD IT DESIRE TO DO SO. SHE CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT THE GOE, UNLIKE SOME GOVERNMENTS, HAS IT WITHIN ITS POWER THE ABILITY TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION TO CONTROL THE DRUG TRAFFIC.

5. ARELLANO ADDED THAT ARA, WHICH HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP, SHARES FULLY THE CONCERN THAT ECUADOR MUST TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. HE REITERATED THE CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN NARCOTICS MATTERS, AND EMPHASIZED THAT PUBLIC ATTENTION IN THE US

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COULD BE FOCUSSED ON ECUADOR WITH PERNICIOUS RESULTS TO BILATERAL RELATIONS.

6. ADMIRAL POVEDA SOUGHT CLARIFICATION OF SEVERAL POINTS IN FALCO'S PRESENTATION, PARTICULARLY A STATEMENT THAT MAJOR TRAFFICKERS OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY. HE WAS TOLD THAT THERE ARE KNOWN TRAFFICKERS WHO ARE NEVER PUNISHED. HE ASKED WHAT PROOFS OF THEIR COMPLICITY EXIST. POVEDA WAS ASSURED THAT WE BELIEVE ADEQUATE PROOF EXISTS OR CAN BE DEVELOPED THROUGH POLICE INVESTIGATION, AND THAT THE USG WOULD ASSIST LOCAL POLICE AUTHORITIES TO THE EXTENT FEASIBLE AND NECESSARY IN THIS AREA.

7. IN HIS RESPONSE, POVEDA STRESSED THAT THE GOE SHARES USG CONCERN OVER THE DRUG PROBLEM, THAT THE GOE REGARDS THE PROBLEM INCREASINGLY AS A DOMESTIC ONE, AND THAT HE COULD COMMIT THE GOE TO MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO ELIMINATE TRAFFICKERS AND THEIR "INSTALLATIONS." HE NOTED THAT ECUADOR'S EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD HAVE IMPROVED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND THAT BOTH AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM AND EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST IT ARE NOW MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE. HE THEN NOTED HIS BELIEF THAT THE MAJOR

PROBLEM LIES IN THE JUDICIARY WHICH, HE EMPHASIZED, IS TOTALLY INDEPENDENT IN ECUADOR. HE OUTLINED SOME STEPS THAT HAD BEEN TAKEN WHEN HE WAS MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW REVIEW OF COURT DECISIONS IN DRUG CASES BY THE MINISTRY. HE REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT THINGS HAVE IMPROVED, BUT ADMITTED THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR STRONGER MEASURES AND THAT HE IS OPEN FOR ANY ADVICE THE USG MIGHT PROVIDE.

8. ARELLANO INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT TO NOTE OUR BELIEF THAT THE PROBLEM LIES NOT ONLY IN THE JUDICIARY, BUT ALSO IN THE POLICE. HE EMPHASIZED AGAIN OUR CONCERN -- AND EXPERIENCE -- THAT THIS KIND OF CORRUPTION CAN BECOME PERVASIVE AND EFFECT GOVERNMENT TO ITS CORE. BOTH
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ARELLANO AND CORR REPEATED OUR CONCERN IS WITH MAJOR TRAFFICKERS AND OUR DESIRE IS TO SEE THEM PUT OUT OF BUSINESS. HE NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR BLOOMFIELD HAS GIVEN GEN DURAN A LIST OF A NUMBER OF MAJOR TRAFFICKERS WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OR SENTENCED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 1652

9. ADMIRAL POVEDA RESPONDED BY NOTING THAT THE CONVERSATION HAD MADE CLEAR TO HIM THE NEED FOR HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION IN THE GOE TO THIS PROBLEM. HE SAID THAT UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THE MYRAID PROBLEMS NEEDING HIGH

LEVEL ATTENTION AND DIRECTION, SOME ARE INEVITABLY LEFT TO BE DEALT WITH AT A LOWER LEVEL, AND THIS HAD BEEN THE CASE WITH NARCOTICS. HE NOW RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS AT A HIGH LEVEL AND ADDED THAT IT WAS APPROPRIATE FOR HIM TO GIVE PERSONAL ATTENTION TO IT SINCE HE HEADS THE "FRENTE INTERNO" (DOMESTIC COUNCIL) OF THE GOE WHICH DEALS WITH POLICE, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND OTHER MATTERS. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD TAKE PROMPT ACTION TO RAISE THE MATTER WITH THE CABINET AND PROPOSE FOR CONSIDERATION A NUMBER OF MEASURES, SPECIFICALLY: 1) REASSIGNMENT OF POLICE WITH NARCOTICS TRAINING TO THE NARCOTICS INTERDICTION EFFORT; 2) A CLEAN-UP OF CORRUPT ELEMENTS IN THE POLICE, WITH TRANSFER OF THOSE SUSPECTED OF INVOLVEMENT AND PROSECUTION OF THOSE AGAINST WHOM PROOF CAN BE OBTAINED; 3) A CLEAN-UP OF ANY OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION FOUND TO BE IMPLICATED WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING; 4) AN ORDER TO THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT TO OVERSEE THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT PERSONALLY; 5) A MORE STRINGENT LAW TO ATTACK DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING (IN THIS CONTEXT POVEDA REFERRED TO COLOMBIA'S RECENT ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE

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ITS NARCOTICS EFFORT); AND 6) DECLARATION OF A "WAR ON NARCOTICS".

10. MS FALCO ASKED, IN THE CONTEXT OF ANTICIPATING QUESTIONS IN NEXT WEEK'S CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, WHAT TIME FRAME POVEDA WAS CONSIDERING FOR UNDERTAKING THE STEPS NOTED ABOVE. HE REPLIED THAT HE WOULD RAISE THE MATTER AT THE NEXT CABINET MEETING, SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 21, AND THAT HE ANTICIPATED ACTIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING SOON THEREAFTER. HE REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE BEST WAY TO UNDERTAKE THIS EFFORT WAS VIA A DECISION OF THE ENTIRE CABINET, RATHER THAN SIMPLY THE SUPREME COUNCIL. HE REQUESTED THAT HE BE SENT IMMEDIATELY A COPY OF THE INFORMATION ON TRAFFICKERS THAT AMBASSADOR BLOOMFIELD GAVE TO GEN DURAN.

11. COMMENT: FALCO AND ARELLANO'S PRESENTATIONS WERE DIRECT AND FIRM, AND LEFT NO DOUBT IN ADMIRAL POVEDA'S MIND OF THE IMPORTANCE THIS PROBLEM IS GIVEN AT THE VERY HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE USG. THE PRESENTATION ALSO MADE VERY CLEAR THE KIND OF PROBLEMS THAT CAN RESULT FROM CONTINUED INATTENTION TO IT ON THE PART OF ECUADOR. PERHAPS IN THIS REGARD IT IS FORTUNATE THAT THE MEETING WAS WITH POVEDA RATHER THAN DURAN, AS THE FORMER HAS BY FAR THE BEST GRASP OF THE LINKAGE OF DISPARATE POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL. POVEDA'S COMMITMENT OF THE GOE TO A WAR ON NARCOTICS, AND THAT THE CABINET WILL ANNOUNCE IT SOON, IS NO SURPRISE SINCE SUBSECRETARY

MANRIQUE PROMISED US ON JANUARY 30 THAT SUCH A WAR
WAS THEN BEING PREPARED FOR CABINET APPROVAL (QUITO 0792).
IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT WHILE THE ACTIONS POVEDA PROMISED
TO UNDERTAKE INCLUDED WEEDING OUT CORRUPT POLICE AND
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, THEY DID NOT INCLUDE SPECIFIC
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REFERENCE TO A CRACKDOWN ON MAJOR TRAFFICKERS. YET,
HE DID ADMIT THAT THE PROBLEM HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN THE
ATTENTION IT DESERVED AND PROMISED TO REMEDY THAT
FAILING. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE GOE WILL
NOW BITE THE BULLET. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT IN THEIR
MINDS THAT OUR OVERALL RELATIONS MAY DEPEND HEAVILY
ON THEIR ABILITY TO DO SO. CORR

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